

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Meeting Notes for May 1, 2002

Agenda Items

- McClellan Long Span Update
- System-wide Elements

Commissioners Present

Tom Bykonen
Carolyn Law
Paul Tomita
Mimi Sheridan
Matthew Kitchen
Jay Lazerwitz

Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
Marty Curry, Planning Commission
Kathy A Dockins, CityDesign

LRRP Business

Approval of April 3rd and 17th meeting notes was deferred until draft versions are available.

In Cheryl's absence, Kathy asked how Panel members felt about the structure for the next two meetings (May 15th and June 5th), as each will be an hour longer than usual. All members agree that we should start the meetings an hour earlier rather than stay an hour later. So, for May 15th and June 5th, the meetings will run from 3pm to 6pm.

Debora reported that the City Council adopted a resolution to put utilities underground along MLK Corridor. They will negotiate an agreement and funding to underground the utilities in commercial areas along the Corridor. The Sound Transit Board adopted a similar motion and is moving forward. It may be a little late for them to include it in the architectural and urban design work to be presented at the next meeting (60% design), however, that does not mean they aren't moving forward with undergrounding. It's just that the next drawings we see may not reflect it.

Also, the community development fund is going forward. It will be presented to the Executive Committee tomorrow and the entire ST Board next week.

ST is moving ahead on design. Lander and Royal Brougham are getting ready to go to bid, and there's a meeting in Tukwila tonight about S 154th St Station.

McClellan Long Span Update

John Walser, Sound Transit

John explained that although he doesn't have much to present today, since there is this one change he wanted to give an update rather than wait for the 60% design meeting. This way the Panel wouldn't be surprised at the difference. In his previous presentation, he indicated that the rail support would be a "double-box" design, but now they are moving toward a "single-box" design. The new design has a six-foot cantilevered cross-section which slopes in two feet, allowing for more light to come through. The architectural team feels that it creates a better underside for viewing. Clearance underneath the trackway ranges from 17.1 feet to 30 feet, depending on where you are in the alignment. Currently, they are

looking at different treatment options for the columns. So far, no natural rhythm has been established with column and transition structure.

Discussion

- I like the longer spacing and the removal of the column at Cheasty. It looks like there is more articulation in the original plan; I would like to see more of that. *The structural team is checking to see if it can make this flush with the crossheads. There will be gaps at the element joints, and we need to figure out what kind of treatment to use to deal with that. Originally felt that the ziggurat pattern would work, but it won't. With the sun casting shadows, the articulation wouldn't be visible. There has been a lot of discussion about what to do.*
- I definitely would like to see more articulation in the supports; I think there should be some articulation in the railing as well. *There has been discussion regarding whether or not we will see any variances. We will not have a solid panel on this segment at all. We should be able to accommodate what it will look like if it is added later.*

No action was necessary as this will be part of the 60% design presentation.

System-wide Elements

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit

Norie Sato, Sound Transit

Don Lyles, Sound Transit

Debora handed out copies of Sound Transit's Urban Design Guidelines for System-wide Elements so we could all follow along with the presentation. She and Cheryl had previously discussed going over this for our new board members, as well as a reminder for continuing board members. Debora reports that ST is moving forward with LINK, and that the ST Board likes a balanced approach to the stations. She defines that balance as having similar (but not necessarily the same) elements at each station. The Guidelines indicate which system-wide elements are the same throughout, and which are complementary rather than identical. Also, rather than wait until the end of the presentation, she feels discussion and questions should come at the end of each section in the handout.

Operational components were first, and Debora explains that all of the functional layouts are the same. There has been no change to the ticket vending stations, information phones or panels. There are different layouts for each type of station (center load, aerial, etc).

Safety and ADA Elements include the wayfinding braid and the "truncated dome" area of the platform, for which we had a sample. All safety/ADA elements work with the signage for the whole system.

Signage will be "clear, crisp and consistent" – part of the comprehensive graphics program for Sound Transit – in order to reduce the possibility of conflicting information.

Vertical Circulation Elements will be consistent system-wide. Note that some system-wide elements have changed because of the shorter length of the first alignment (S 154th to McClellan).

Discussion

- I'm not as concerned about the mechanical elements as I am about the design and internal elements. *We have had to change some internal elements to accommodate common station-wide standardized elements.*

Additional standardized elements include phone boxes, newspaper vending, trash/recycling containers, lamps, and bike racks. The plan for newspaper boxes is not moving forward system-wide as ST had hoped. They are negotiating with newspaper vendors, but the papers are not obligated to use what's provided, so that may not happen. Trash & recycling will be discussed later. For lighting, a "menu" of complementary choices is available, so while lighting elements at individual stations may be different from other stations, they will all be part of the same "family." Bike racks and bike lockers will be standard at each station.

Elements of continuity are parameters driving station design in order to express the essence of the station and its architectural design intent while identifying it as part of LINK in a non-overwhelming or monolithic way. These include using steel and glass, working with light, canopy glazing, canopy angles (so water drains away from the edge), and other structural components. Most of the glazing pieces are standardized, not custom, so ST can have replacements in stock when they are needed. Debora points out that the exception would be pieces including integrated art; those might be custom sized.

Discussion

- What do these photos mean? I don't remember approving lights like this. *These guidelines were developed in 2000, so these are just supporting graphics we pulled. They are not intended to represent what will actually be there, unless indicated otherwise.*
- How do the architects feel about the use of standard canopy glazing? *They've been working with it and figuring ways to work it into the design. They've discussed possible exceptions where they would need to use something different; perhaps at Beacon Hill Station. Because of vandalism concerns, the design for Lander and Royal Brougham includes some metal roofing. This glazing is more scratch-resistant than it used to be. We're considering exceptions because we're trying to be smart about the long-term wear. Each station should be able to be maintained for a long time.*

The next item in the guidelines is the marker, which will be covered later by Don and Norie.

The qualities of system-wide materials used is listed in the guidelines. They must be durable, vandal-resistant, sustainable, slip-resistant, reflect ambient light, cost-effective, have natural finishes (to minimize painted surfaces), etc. This will allow for some choice for varied designs but still fit within a "family" of finish materials.

A specific color palette is also being used, and Debora passed out samples of possible colors: a dark blue, a dark grey, and red for accent pieces.

Discussion

- Why are the blue and the grey so close to each other, and so close to black? Why not just use black? *It's a maintenance issue; the darker color will wear better over time. Also, it won't compete with other elements of station design. In some of the stations, there will be more painted steel, so we want this to be in the background, not the focus. (passed out photos) You'll see that the quality of the color appears different with different lighting and other elements around it. It's not a lifeless black.*

There are a dozen lamps and standardized fixtures in the lighting schedule for LINK, and we were able to see a sample of the standardized platform edge light. It will be mounted horizontally and integrated into the structural elements. It was selected last fall, and they're moving forward with it.

Discussion

- Is a round lens optional? *Yes, we're using a flat lens at Royal Brougham, but can use round where needed. One advantage is perceived glare reduction. This fixture has even distribution of light.*
- Will the architects include this lighting in the drawings? *Yes. Will there be color? Yes.*

At this point, Joni Earl arrived, as she had not yet attended a LRRP meeting and wanted to meet the Panel. Introductions were made all around. Joni reported the huge wins with undergrounding, and wanted to thank the Panel since it is a big part of that. The Executive Committee of the Board will be looking at the art program tomorrow. Questions before we resume with the System-wide Elements?

Marty: Can you talk more about the Art program?

Joni: The Finance Committee members started the conversation about this. With the upcoming budget cuts, they saw the art program as one big chunk of money that could be reduced. Their motivation was not anti-art; they were just trying to save money. Now we're trying to integrate the cost of art more into construction and design instead of keeping it as a separate thing. There is a lot of support on the Board for public art, so I am hopeful they won't make any major changes.

Back to review of system-wide elements... Site furnishings include handrails, drinking fountains, seating, fencing, and bollards. Handrails and leaning rails will be standardized (stainless steel). The exception would be those that are built-in to the station. Drinking fountains are standard in that we have none as yet. There will be a "family" of seating to choose from. One is a "perforated" bench which works well with the trash receptacles. There is a little variety with the seating, so each station designer can choose what will work best for the particular station. There are very few bollards throughout the system, so ST has backed away from that being a standardized element. The MLK bollards and rails (hand and leaning) work within the MLK family of stations.

Discussion

- Will the benches be painted, and if so, using colors from the palette? *They are meant to be background pieces, not accent, so they may be black. They will be the same colors as the trash can if we decide to go with a custom color. We will also have to work within the manufacturer's palette. Exceptions to the rule would be benches which are included as part of the art program.*
- Will there be a mixture of leaning rails and benches? What will it be? *There IS a ratio in the design guidelines, but the general rule is that there will be a windscreen and a leaning rail where there are no benches.*
- What's your perception of how much seating there will be? *24 to 25 lineal feet on the platform. Two windscreens on each 380-foot platform; two six-foot benches plus wheelchair parking. The architects have taken advantage of the design to add more leaning rails. Unlike a bus station, where the wait may be up to 30 minutes, at the LINK stations the trains arrive every four to six minutes, so there is not as strong of a need for more benches.*
- Are we talking about the benches and trash receptacles just on the platforms and not in the plazas? *Yes, when talking about system-wide elements, we are referring only to elements within the station itself.*

Norie and Don will be presenting options for the Marker; Debora first gave an update. This is something that has been discussed quite a bit. It goes beyond signage; this is something that will work within the LINK system, and the LINK icon will be developed as a part of it. Seattle Transportation may not agree on the best place for the Marker and may want it out of the way. Repetition and recognition are the two most important features of the marker. Norie and Don have models of our three options, and want our comments.

The Guidelines talk about the need for a Marker – the need to express a symbolic aspect while being able to compete in different environments. It must stand out and distinguish LINK from other signs and markers. Cost is also a factor; the Marker is included in the signage budget so money is tight. Having electrical power at each marker is cost-prohibitive, so the design must reflect ambient light. It has to be distinctive enough so people can point to it and say, "Go to the..."

Each of the three options had shapes that indicated direction. One evoked the braid, one looked like a "waiting" curve, and one was more pointed, with a perforated sheath around it. All had a glass sphere incorporated into the design.

The international symbol for light rail can be inside the sphere. The word "LINK" could also be incorporated, to give one assurance as he or she got closer to the Marker. The braid also represents three counties and three transportation systems.

Discussion

- What materials will be used for the Marker? *The blue part of each model represents steel with an interesting finish. The silver part represents stainless steel. The braid could be made of stainless steel tubing. The connection at the base is intended to work on many different contexts. It will usually be located near the curb. We're working within the footprint parameters of the pylons outside the bus tunnel, between the curb and building face.*
- I like that the sphere uses the ambient light.
- If the Marker is pointing to the station, which shape is best? The more easily identifiable it is, the better. *I think the braid is easiest.*
- I think the piece with the most impact is the one with the curve. It's distinctive, and changes as you move, although it is harder to describe. I like its complexity.
- I think the braid stands out the most. Number 3 fits into more traditional designs. *The genesis of the marker is that it was conceived to stand out in a complex urban environment.*
- The places we'll encounter it initially, however, are not busy urban environments. In the absence of adjacent urban features, the braid seems most like an art object. It doesn't say "transit system." *How can we identify it with LINK, not as a transit station? We want to do it in a way that provides delight.*
- You could use an actual welded chain link, like on rural mailboxes (much laughter).
- Will these be at each entrance? *They will be located at the sidewalk environment for the at-grade stations, at the plaza curb for the elevated stations, and at the curb adjacent to the entry point of tunnel stations.*
- What about for the downtown transit tunnel, where there are about half a dozen entrances? *We'll have to go through a selective process to determine which entrances to the downtown tunnel will have the Marker. It's not worked out for a joint marker, because Metro wants to retain its own identity. For McClellan, it could be up to ½ a block away. In the outlying areas, the regional "T" will need to be more present; less present in urban areas. We're working on the hierarchy of the symbols for each station. At-grade stations are so visible, the Marker's job is different.*
- Number 2 is my least favorite. It's the most sign-like. I'm afraid the flow of Number 1 (braid) will be interrupted by the mounting plate and bolts. It's the most sculpture-like. *Canopies will also diminish its visibility. The bottom has character as well as the top.*
- I don't think my view differs much from the rest of the Panel. I am not drawn to Number 3; Number 2 is more directive. I hope the braid aspect doesn't "unravel."
- Okay, so Number 2 is gone. I think the braid is more complex. Would the design be included in the graphics package? *If it works – I could see it as a symbol, like on a tourist map.*

The next two meetings will focus on MLK urban design (5/15) and all three at-grade stations (6/5), respectively. Each meeting will be three hours long and will run from 3pm to 6pm. Marty suggests that we have refreshments at each; Kathy will check on that. At the next meeting, Jay would like to see color and how it's working out. Debora says that all perspectives with updated lighting, signage, and color will be ready for the 6/5 meeting (60% design). Some decisions (including the benches and the Dijon/yellow color for the "truncated dome" part of the platform) were made after the perspectives, so they won't be there.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.